



## **LB 912 NCR Opposition Testimony**

Good afternoon chairman Murante and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Bri McLarty and I am testifying today in my capacity as the Director of Voting Rights with Nebraskans for Civic Reform a not-for-profit, non-partisan voting rights advocacy organization dedicated to creating a more modern and robust democracy.

Nebraskans for Civic Reform strongly opposes LB 912 as it creates a second class of voters subject to unnecessary and burdensome restrictions with little to no notice. This bill requires presentation of identification documents by those voters that the county election official has designated with a specific notation, known as "in NVRA". Those voters will be required to present to a poll worker, or include with their returned absentee ballot, two forms of identification.

Testifiers after me will address the impact these restrictions will have on specific populations as well as the privacy concerns associated with mailing sensitive personal information with a confidential ballot. I specifically want to address the how this bill is not a viable solution to the problem identified by proponents.

Presumably LB 912 is attempting to address those individuals that may have moved, as presumed by the county election official after receiving notice the voter has filled out a National Change of Address form, but attempt to vote at the polling location of their voting residence, what the county official presumes to be their former address.

Nebraskans for Civic Reform argues that modernization is a better solution to this problem than the restrictions posed in LB 912. This bill is requiring more of a voter to cast a ballot than current statute does to register to vote for the first time in Nebraska and significantly more than it requires to re-register. Punishing voters for failing to return a card this size that is only sent once is unconscionable.

In person and by mail registration updates require absolutely no accompanying documentation. Online requires only a license number or state ID number to retrieve the voter's signature. The confirmation card requires only a signature. Asking voters for two identification documents at the polls with little to no notice is not a solution and honestly begs the question: Is this the best we could come up with? Is putting an immense burden on the voter the only solution to this problem?

Nebraskans for Civic Reform would argue, no. Modernization would go much further in updating and keeping voter rolls clean, encouraging voters to update their registration and

dissuading them from returning to old polling sites and voting in the wrong jurisdiction. Just last session this committee heard LB 383, Senator Hansen's, county-to-county portability proposal that would directly solve this problem. Under that bill, the voters this bill is concerned with would be able to update their registration at their new polling site *and* cast a ballot knowing it would be counted.

We've taken steps to modernize our elections with online voter registration. A press release from the Secretary of State's office reported that 870 registrations were submitted in the first 24 hours. It would be interesting to see how many of those registrations were individuals with the "in NVRA" notation updating their registration.

Expanding online voter registration is a solution. This week my office received an email from a University student who was having trouble with the online voter registration system, it wasn't recognizing her learner's permit. That is what we should be focusing on, expanding the system to recognize learner's permits and incorporating public assistance agencies that also have signatures on file.

Furthermore, enacting policies like automatic voter registration would capture those voters that renew their license when they move. The current motor voter question is an optional check box on the application. Making the voter registration automatic would update those registrations with the new address – decreasing the number of voters with an "in NVRA" notation.

Finally, a single post-card is not enough. We should be looking at ways to utilize technology to provide additional notice to voters about the status of their registration. The current website for registration look-up only lists their party, polling site, and political subdivisions on their ballot. Why not add a notation that their registration may need to be updated and then provide the link to online voter registration? That way a voter checking to see if they're registered in Nebraska receives notice that they may need to update their registration.

The voter registration form includes a place to collect an email address and phone number – let's explore the possibility of reaching out to the voter through alternate mediums before we ask them to mail their bank statement in with their ballot.

At some point we have to ask ourselves, why are we willing to consider placing additional burdens on the voter but not ask more of our election administration? From transitioning to electronic poll-books to implementing Election Day Registration, modernization will go a long way towards addressing those voters with "in NVRA" notations. Modernization will come with additional duties and expenses for the county election officials, but when the end result is expanding access to our elections to more Nebraskans it is an investment worth making.

Please consider the alternative solutions that have been presented to this committee and I strongly urge the committee to oppose the burdensome policies proposed in LB 912.